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A SERMON

PREACHED

Before the Honourable Military Company at *St. Clements-Danes*: *July* 25.

BIBL. CANT. ACAD.

BY

JOHN SCOTT, Minister of *St.* Thomas *Southwark*.

LONDON,

Printed for *Tho. Taylor*, at the Hand and Bible in the New Buildings on *London-Bridge*.

1673.

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To the Right Worſhipful

Sir ROBERT PEYTON, Preſident, and one of the Stewards elect.
Captain JOHN PERRY.
Lieut. GEORGE CLERK.
Lieut. THOMAS LOW.
Lieut. WILLIAM PEPPER.
Enſign JOHN MERYDALE.
Serjeant RALPH HOLLAND.

Stewards of the Honourable, the Military Company, and to the Stewards elect.

Sir RICHARD COMBES.
JAMES LONG. Eſq.
CHARLES HUMPHREVILE. Eſq.
CHRISTOPHER VANE. Eſq.
JOHN AYLOFFE. Eſq.

and to

Captain JOHN HOOKER, Treaſurer.

Worthy Gentlemen,

EVer ſince I conſented to your deſires, to Print this rude Diſcourſe, I have been hardly put to it, to make an Apology for it; at firſt I reſolved to go the way of all Authors, and indite my Patrons, for committing a rape upon my modeſty, and dragging this poor offering, like an unwilling Sacrifice to the Altar; but upon ſecond thoughts, I could not but diſapprove ſuch a kind addreſs, as too diſingenious, and unmannerly; for to avouch your importunities for the publication

lication of so mean a discourse, I might reasonably think, would be to libel your Judgments, and to make the world believe, I designed Revenge, rather than Obedience; and therfore, in conclusion, I rather resolved to take all the blame upon my self, hoping that in the great crowd of silly things that come abroad into the world, this little trifle may pass unobserved; but if it should be so unhappy, as to be taken notice of, I hope the world will not be so unconscionable, as to deny me the priviledge of playing the fool, as well as others; whatsoever imperfections there may be in the Sermon, the subject of it is so great and excellent, that 'tis no shame for any man to lie prostrate under it, for intreating of such high Arguments insufficiency, is both Art, and Rhetorick; If therefore I have not given it a Character as great as it deserves. I hope this will in some measure excuse me, that I am a man, and not an Angel, but however I fare in the esteem of others; this comfort I have, that the weaker the Discourse is, the greater Argument it will be, of the gratitude and obedience of

Your humble and affectionate Servant,

JOHN SCOTT.

ERRATA.

PAge 1. *for* aley, read, aloy. *line* 5. *for* our bodies, *r.* as for our bodies. *p.* 5. and us. *p.* 8. *for* menaceth, *r.* meaneth, and, to be left out. *p.* 9. *for* infer *r.* infere. put in, can. *p.* 10. *for* underst. understandings. *p.* 12. *for* By, *r.* A. *p.* 13. add, all other. *p. for* ride *r.* run. *p.* 15. *for* cluttering, *r.* clattering. *p.* 17. acknowledge.

Epeſ. 6. 11.

Put on therefore the whole Armour of God.

THat which giveth us the advantage of Brutes, and ranketh us in a form of Beings above them, is the Rational and Immortal Spirits we carry about with us; for our Bodies they are but clods of earth ſteeped in phlegme, and kneaded into Humane ſhapes, and do derive their Pedegree from the ſame Principles with flies and ſcare-bees, and the moſt contemptible Animals: but our Souls are of a purer alley, and by their nature are allied to Angels, and do border upon God himſelf; and it is by the Title of theſe Rational Natures that we are now ſuperior to Beaſts, and hope hereafter to be equal with Angels; and yet beſotted Creatures that we are, how do we prefer our Bodies before our Souls, imploying all our cares in providing for, and pampering of our fleſh, as if our Reaſon were given us for no other end but to be Cook and Taylor to our Bodies, to

ſtudy Sauſes and faſhions for them; whilſt our Immortal Spirits pine and famiſh, and like forlorn things are wholly abandoned by us to wretchedneſs and miſery: that it is ſo, is apparent by too many woful inſtances: the poor Labourer that ſweateth, and toileth all day for his Body, thinketh much at night to beſtow upon his Soul a Prayer of a quarter of an hour long; the Tradeſman that thinks no Induſtry too much to make a fair and ample proviſion for his Body, grudgeth to expend a few good thoughts and endeavours in the purchaſe of an eternal Inheritance for his Soul; the Souldier that ſhuts up his Body in ribs of Iron and Coats of Male to ſecure it from the Sword and Bullets of his Enemies, expoſeth his Soul unarmed to all the fiery darts of the Devil; and though his underſtanding hath as much need of Knowledge as his Head hath of an Helmet, his Will as much need of Juſtice as his Breaſt of a Buckler, his Affections as much need of Fortitude and temperance as his Legs and hands have of Greaves and Gantlets, yet he venures them all naked amongſt a thouſand Enemies, as if his little Toe or Finger were more dear and precious to him, than his Immortal Soul. But if we would be good Souldiers and good men too, we muſt arm our ſelves within as well as without, and as we harneſs our Bodies in Iron, ſo muſt we put on upon our Souls the whole Armor of God, and this is the counſel of the Apoſtle in the Text, which I have choſen for

for the subject of my ensuing Discourse: *Put on therefore the whole armour of God.* By the whole Armor of God, here we are to understand the Christian Religion, that is, the Doctrine and Duties of Christianity, as you may see at large from the fourteenth to the eighteenth Verses of this Chapter, where the Apostle instances in the particular parts of which this whole armour consisteth; the first is the Girdle of Truth, that is, the Doctrine of the Gospel, in opposition to all Heathen errors, and heretical insinuations: The second is, the Breastplate of Righteousness, that is, sincere and faithful obedience unto Christ: the third is, the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, that is, the practice of Christian Charity and Peaceableness: the fourth is, the Shield of Faith, that is, the belief of the Promises, and threats of the Gospel: the fifth is, the Helmet, that is, the hope of Salvation: the sixth is, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: and the last is, Prayer and Watchfulness. These are the several parts of this Divine armour; in which you see are reckoned both the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity; by the putting on of these therefore nothing else can be meant, but only our hearty belief of the Doctrines and our sincere Practice of the Duties of Christian Religion; for to this sence the Phrase is frequently used in the New Testament: thus when the Apostle exhorteth us *to put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, in Rom. 13. 14. it is plain he meaneth nothing else but

believing in Christ, and obeying him. And so also when in *Ephes.* 4. 22, 24. he exhorteth them to put off the old man, and put on the new, he meaneth nothing else, but that they should forsake their Heathen Superstitions and Idolatrous uncleannesses, and conform all their actions to the new Rule of Christian purity.

In the words thus explained, you have first something implied, which is, that the Christian Religion is armour of defence unto the Souls of men.

Secondly, something expressed, that if we mean it should arm and defend us, we must believe and practise it.

First, that the Christian Religion is armour of defence unto the Souls of men, that is, it is of the same use to mens Souls as Armour is to their Bodies; for as the end of armour is to defend mens bodies, and secure them against the weapons of their Enemies, so the great end and design of the Christian Religion is to defend mens Souls from whatsoever is hurtful and injurious to them. Now there are but two sorts of evils in the world, both which are injurious to the Souls of men. The first is the evil of sin, and the second is the evil of misery, and against both these Christianity doth strongly arm us.

First, for the evil of sin, which upon several accounts is injurious to mens Souls, it overthroweth the Order and Oeconomy of their natures, inslaving their Reason to their Passions and Appetites;

tites; as it diſcompoſeth the tranquility of their minds, by inſpiring them with wild and inconſiſtent paſſions, and it diſturbeth the peace of their Conſciences, by ſuggeſting black thoughts, and horrible reflections to them; theſe and ſeveral other ways is Vice injurious to our Souls. And therefore 'tis the deſign of Chriſtianity to arm us againſt this great evil, to ſecure and defend us againſt all the Weapons of unrighteouſneſs. Hence the Apoſtle telleth us, *that the Grace of God*, that is, the Goſpel, *was revealed from Heaven*, for this very end, *to teach us to deny all ungodlineſs, and worldly luſt, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, Tit. 2. 11. and St. *John* telleth us, *That for this purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy tha works of the Devil*, 1 John 3. 8. this was the errant of the Son of God into the world, and the deſign of that incomparable Religion he taught, *to deſtroy the works of the Devil*: And indeed if we conſider what an effectual courſe Chriſtianity taketh to defend us againſt ſin, we muſt confeſs it to be the moſt excellent armour in the world; for,

1. Firſt, It reſtraineth us from it by the pureſt Laws: the Laws of Chriſtian Religion have made ſo great a gulph between our ſins, and ſeparated us from them by ſuch an infinite diſtance, that it is impoſſible for them to come at us, or for us to go to them, whilſt we perſevere in our obedience to them, for they do not only forbid us that which is really evil, but do alſo command us to abſtain from all appearances of evil, and do remove us ſo far out of the

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territories of ſin, that they will not permit us to approach the borders of it; and leſt we might unhappily go farther than we ſhould, they forbid us to go as far as we may, and will not allow us ſo much as to come within the skirts, and ſuburbs of iniquity. For in moral actions the diſtance is frequently ſo ſmall, between the utmoſt of what is lawful, and the nearmoſt of what is ſinful, that there are very few men in the world can ſet a rule to themſelves, hitherto may I go and no farther; and therefore without an infallible guide to point out to them the juſt and particular limits of lawful and unlawful, men can hardly be ſecure, whilſt they dwell upon upon the frontiers and neighbourhood of ſin; and therefore the Goſpel commands us, at leaſt, to endeavour to keep at diſtance from ſinning, and not come near the pitch, leſt we be defiled by it; neither doth it only reſtrain us from outward acts, but alſo from inward inclinations to evil; we muſt be ſo far from murdering our Brother, that we muſt not hate, or wiſh ill to him; ſo far from practiſing rapine and oppreſſion, that we muſt not ſo much as covet our neighbours Poſſeſſions; ſo far from acting adultery, that we muſt not look upon a woman to luſt after her: thus the Laws of our Religion you ſee do ſtrike at the very root of ſin, and choak the very ſprings from whence thoſe bitter ſtreams derive; and do not like other Laws meerly reſtrain our outward practice, but alſo lay reins upon our deſires, and extend their Empire to our free-born thoughts. In this reſpect therefore Chriſtianity doth moſt effectually

effectually arm us against sin, as it restraineth us from it by the purest Laws that ever were.

Secondly, By disswading us from it with the most prevailing Arguments. There is no Article of the Christian faith, but is a copious Topick of motives to Virtue; and if men would but take the pains to extract from each their proper and just inferences, and to ponder those great obligations to gratitude, and duty which the several Articles of their Religion do devolve upon them, Christianity must necessarily do wonders in the world, and work strange alterations in the lives and manners of Christians; for there is no stone that it leaveth unturned, nothing within us that is capable of perswasion, but it addresseth to, to win upon our hope; it proposeth to us a happiness so extensive, that we can neither desire, nor imagine beyond it; a happiness that is equal to the utmost capacities of our natures, and parrallel to the longest duration of our beings, that hath not the least tang of misery in it, no bitter farewel nor appendant sting to it, but is all quintessence composed of the purest extracts of joy and pleasure, what greater motive can be urged to disswade us from sinning, than the hope of such a happiness as doth so infinitely out-bid all that vice can proffer us, and is weighty enough to preponderate all its temptations, though all the world were in the counterballance: but if we are so wedded to our lusts that no hope of advantage will disingage us from them; Christianity thunders against them all the dreadful threats that are capable of scaring us into sober purposes; it denounceth unquenchable fire, and eternal

nal vengeance againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men, and allarms our fears with all the inconceivable horrors that an everlaſting hel menaceth; and that this may not ſcare us only from open prophaneſs into cloſe and ſecret hypocriſie, it aſſureth us that there will be a day of fearful account, and wherein all that we acted behind the Curtain, ſhall be brought into publike view, upon an open Theater, and proclaimed to all the world by the Trumpet of God, and the voice of an Archangel; and that we may be aſſured that theſe terrors of the Lord are not meer bugs, and ſcare crows, it giveth us a fearful example of Gods ſeverity againſt ſin, in the death and ſufferings of his own Son, wherein he hath proclaimed himſelf an implacable enemy to vice, in that he would not pardon it without the blood of the moſt beloved darling of his Soul; and certainly he that after this aſſurance of Gods ſeverity againſt ſin, can dare to be wicked, is a moſt valiant and courageous ſinner; and if after he hath confronted the Tribunal of God, and out-faced the the flames of Hel, he can laugh at this fearful example of the Divine ſeverity, he is fit for a Reſerve, or a forlorn-hope, and may boldly venture to be wicked through all the terrors in the world: but if men ſhould be ſo ſenſeleſly wicked as not to be perſwaded either by hope or fear, yet perhaps ingenuity may prevail; which that it may, Chriſtianity preſſeth us with the moſt endearing motives in the world, it ſets before us the infinite obligations which God hath laid upon us, in beſtowing upon us our beings, in ſurrounding us with his careful

Providence,

Providence, but above all in giving his Son to die for us; and to infer this laſt, it repreſenteth our moſt kind and merciful Redeemer groaning under the cruelty of our ſins; it bringeth forth his bloody garments, as *Anthony* did thoſe of the murdred *Cæſar*, and ſpreadeth them before our eyes, and in the moſt paſſionate manner, accuſeth our ſins for being his Aſſaſſines and murderers, and we find in our hearts to hug his Executioners, to harbour the Traitors that ſlew our Friend, our Friend that loved us a thouſand times better than we love our ſelves: Surely if we ſhould, we ſhould deſerve to be branded for the moſt diſingenious and moſt ill natured Perſons in the world; for 'tis impoſſible that any kindneſs ſhould oblige us, if we find in our hearts to be wicked, in ſpight of all the love of God, and all the wound and blood of our Redeemer. Thus you ſee with what powerful Arguments Chriſtianity doth arm us againſt ſin.

Thirdly, It arm th us againſt it with the moſt powerful Grace and aſſiſtance. Chriſtianity is animated with a Divine Spirit, that hath all along enlivened & actuated it, & rendered it in all ages ſo ſucceſsful and victorious, 'twas by virtue of this Divine Spirit that it triumphed in its very infancie over all the power and malice of the world, that like the Palm-tree, it grew by depreſſion, and conquered in the midſt of flames; inſomuch that within leſs than an hundred years after the death of Chriſt, it had made ſucceſsful inroads into the remoteſt Kingdoms, and captivated a great part of mankind into the belief and obedience of it; and though it found the minds of men prepoſſeſſed with a contrary Religion, & conſequently had mighty prejudices to combat before it could come to lay ſiege to their Reaſon; yet it charged

like a Thunderbolt through all theſe obſtacles, and with its ſpiritual Artillery battered down all oppoſition before it, and wrought ſuch ſtrange alterations in the world, that the world ſcarce knew her ſelf, and ſtood admiring at her own change: She ſaw the thronged Temples of the Heathens unfrequented, the adored Gods derided, the celebrated Oracles ceaſed, the wiſe Philoſophers puzled, the enraged Magiſtrates diſheartened, by the unſucceſsfulneſs of their own cruelties, and all this done by a few deſpicable and illiterate fiſher.men, and yet all this had not been ſo ſtrange, had it won men only to an Opinion or a Faction; for ſuch chaff will ſooneſt catch ſmall birds, a giddy and a hair-brain'd multitude; but the wonder of it was, that Chriſtianity converted men from folly and vice, to a ſublime pitch of virtue, and ſubſtantial goodneſs; and of vitious, deboyched, and diſſolute, made them ſober and temperate, and righteous, which is ſo clear an evidence of that extraordinary power and efficacie that accompanied it, that the Heathens attributed its ſucceſſes to the power of Magick, as St. *Auſtin* hath obſerved, concluding that 'twas impoſſible for it to conquer through ſo many difficulties, without the aſſiſtance of ſome mighty and powerful Spirit: and though it doth not now convert men ſo miraculouſly as it did at firſt, but proceedeth in more rational and humane methods, by joyning in with our underſtand- and leading us forward by reaſon and ſobriety, by inſtructing our faculties in the right perception of things, and by diſcovering a fuller evidence, and ſtronger connexion of Truths; ſo that whatſoever aſſiſtance it now affordeth us, it worketh in the ſame way, and after the

ſame manner, as if they were all performed by the ſtrength of our own Reaſon, yet ſtill there are mighty aſſiſtances accompanying all its miniſtrations, and it is enlivened with a Divine Power and efficacie ; for ſtill thoſe Promiſes are in force, to him that hath ſhall be given ; and he will give his Spirit unto every one that asketh ; ſo that Gods Grace is wanting to none, but to thoſe that are wanting to themſelves ; for if we will be ſo ingenious as to do what we can, God will be ſo gracious as to help us to do what we cannot ; if therefore we do not do all, it is our own fault, ſince we may do all through Chriſt, who will ſtrengthen us, if we do what we can. What therefore may we not do who are thus armed with Divine aſſiſtance ? What ſins are there ſo ſtrong, that we may not mortifie ? What Paſſions ſo violent, that we may not tame ? What habits ſo inveterate, that we may not vanquiſh, who are thus backed, and aided with auxiliaries from above ? And thus you ſee what impenitrable armour the Chriſtian Religion is againſt all the darts and weapons of ſin, and how able it is to render us ſhot-proof, and invulnerable againſt all its temptations.

I come now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which is to ſhew you that Chriſtianity is armor of proof againſt the evil of miſery, that is againſt all thoſe cares and fears, thoſe griefs and ſorrows, vexations and anxieties wherewith we are here incompaſſed on every ſide ; and indeed there is nothing in the world can give ſo much eaſe unto the minds of men, and fortifie them ſo impregnably againſt the miſeries of the world as true Religion. Hence is that of our Saviour, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refreſh*

you, Matth. 11. 28. that is, all you that are tired out with the croſſes and troubles of this miſerable world, do but become by Diſciples, believe my Doctrine, and obey my Commands, and I will give eaſe and refreſhment to your minds. And in the following verſe he telleth us, that by taking his yoke, that is his Religion upon us, we ſhall find reſt for our Souls : and of neceſſity his yoke muſt mightily contribute to the arming of Souls againſt the troubles of the world upon theſe following accounts.

1. Firſt, in that it naturally inſpireth us with true courage and magnanimity ; there is nothing in the world ſo valiant and heroick as a true Chriſtian ſpirit ; for its courage is compoſed of the beſt Metal in the World, of Patience and Temperance, of Conſtancie and Reſignation to the Will of God, all which mingled together do beget in the Soul an invincible firmneſs and ſtaiedneſs of mind againſt all dangerous and dolorous accidents whatſoever : for what accident can daunt a Soul that is weaned by temperance from the pleaſures of the body, and hardened by patience againſt the pain and diſpleaſures of it, that hath ſo ſubdued her paſſions as to be alwayes preſent to her ſelf, and conſtant to her own Reaſon, and having reſigned up all to the Conduct of Divine Providence, receiveth every accident as a token of love, and giveth a hearty welcome to whatſoever befalleth her ? Such a Soul as this ſtandeth firm as a Rock, out-braving all the ſtorms of Fortune, making its envious waves retire in empty foam, and inſignificant Paſsion : but whereſoever theſe brave Qualities are wanting, it is impoſsible a man ſhould be truly couragious ; for intemperance, impatience,

tience, and diffidence will let in every trouble that aſſaults us, to ſpoil and ravage us at pleaſure, and expoſe all the peace and tranquillity of our minds to the mercy of every trifle, ſo that we ſhall not be able to abide the ſhock of any croſs accident that encountereth us, but like cowardly Poultrons ſhall lie down vanquiſhed at the feet of every trouble that befalleth us; and there is no greater ſigne of cowardize and weakneſs of ſpirit, than an aptneſs to be diſcompoſed with trifles; for as ſick perſons are offended at the light of the Sun, and the freſhneſs of the air, which adminiſter pleaſure and recreation to thoſe that are in health; even ſo perſons of weak and puſillanimous ſpirits are eaſily offended; their minds are ſo tender and effeminate, that they cannot bear the leaſt air of trouble without diſturbance; and what would be a diverſion to a courageous Soul, grieveth and incommodateth them. But when we are once arrived to a due pitch of patience, temperance and confidence in God, all the troubles of the world will be but like flea-bites to a ſleeping Lyon, & we ſhall no more be concern d with theſe little croſſes and miſchances, than the Moon is with the yelping of thoſe whiffling Curs that bark at her from below. For true Chriſtian Courage is the moſt heroick of all other: for Courage is meerly brutal conſiſting in heats and ferments of the blood and ſpirits, in which Game-cocks and Maſtives out-vy the greateſt Heroes in the world: but the Courage of a Chriſtian is truly Rational and manly, founded in Religion and true Principles of Reaſon, and ſo is a thouſand times more manageable and uſeful than that which ariſeth only out of temper and complexion; for this ſort of Courage

is headſtrong and unruly; and like an hot metall'd Horſe, doth oftentimes ride away with the Rider, and inſtead of ſecuring us from, carries us headlong into miſchief; but true Chriſtian courage is gentle and obſequious to the Commands of Reaſon, and upon that account is far more uſeful in our extremities, and is more applicable to our neceſsities. Since therefore Chriſtianity inſpireth us with ſuch an excellent Courage as this is, it cannot but render us invincible, and effectually ſhield us againſt all the blows of Fortune.

Secondly, It armeth us againſt the miſeries of the World, by reconciling us unto God; 'tis impoſsible a man ſhould be free from trouble and anxiety of mind whilſt he is in a ſtate of emnity with God: for there is grafted within our very natures ſuch a natural awe and dread of a Divine Power, as doth neceſſarily alarum all that fear and horror that is within us, whenſoever we knowingly provoke that Power we ſo much dread and tremble at; and our Conſciences being thus in a tumult and uproar, will give a ſting to all our miſeries, and render all our dangers more terrible and amazing; 't will repreſent every croſs accident to us as a Meſſenger of God's vengeance, and every little danger as an approaching ſtorm from Heaven; and then how muſt every danger affright, and every miſery oppreſs us that comes with a Commiſsion from that Almighty Vengeance, which we ſo naturally dread and tremble at? How can we but ſink even under our croſſes when we think what a load of wrath there is in them? How can we but quake at our dangers, when we look upon them as ſo many thunderbolts,

which

which Omnipotent fury is hurling at our head; the thought of this will imbitter all our miſeries, and make the moſt trifling dangers to look ſtern and terrible; hence it is that of the Wiſeman, *The wicked flee when no man purſueth, but the righteous are bold as a Lyon*: For though no man purſueth them, yet their own Conſciences like reſtleſs furies haunt them whether ever they go, and this makes them flee before a ſhadow, and when none purſueth them, they run away from themſelves. Thus whilſt we are in hoſtility againſt God, we lie open to all weathers, and our own Conſciences do betray us to the fury of all thoſe troubles and dangers that ſurround us. But the great end of Chriſtian Religion is to reconcile us unto God; in order to which it both propoſeth a peace to us, and the terms and Articles upon which it is to be obtained; which terms when we have performed, the Quarrel preſently endeth in a mutual Confederacie; and of enemies we become the friends and favourites of God; upon which there followeth a Jubilee of joy and peace within; the Conſcience ſmileth and groweth calm, as the Ocean when the wind is laid: and now, if troubles befal us, if dangers encounter us, 'tis all but like the ratling of Hail upon the tiles of a Muſick-houſe, which with all their cluttering and noiſe will not be able to diſturb the Harmony within. For a quiet Conſcience will be a Paradiſe in a wilderneſs, a Haven in the midſt of ſtorms; it will make a man fearleſs in danger, joyful in tribulation, and inable him to ſing with a thorn at his breaſt; and when troubles and croſſes ſurround him on every ſide, that will be a Sanctuary to him,

whereunto he may retire, and be merry in ſpite of Fortune: Thus by reconciling us unto God, the Chriſtian Religion armeth us againſt all the miſeries in the world.

Thirdly It doth it alſo by aſſuring us of that ſpecial care and regard which the Divine Providence hath of us, and our affairs: Chriſtianity aſſureth us, *that all things ſhall work together for the good of them that love God, and keep his Commandments*: that even their afflictions ſhall proſper them, and all the croſs-winds conſpire to blow them to the right Port; and what greater ſecurity can a man deſire, then to have all his affairs managed by a Providence that is infinitely wiſe, and knoweth what is beſt for us; infinitely kind, and willeth what he knoweth beſt; and infinitely powerful, and doth what it willeth; this is the utmoſt that any modeſt or reaſonable man can deſire for his ſecurity, and he that firmly believeth this, muſt neceſſarily be happy whatſoever befalleth him: for whatſoever happeneth, he taketh as a favour, becauſe it cometh from the hand of that wiſe and merciful Providence, which he is well aſſured doth both know and do that which is beſt for him: and is it not a thouſand times better that our affairs ſhould be managed as God thinketh fit, who is ſo much wiſer than we, and loveth us far better than we do our ſelves, than that they ſhould always jump with our childiſh hopes, and keep pace with our extravagant fancies; and if the Government of all events that befal us were put into our own hands, would it not be our wiſdom and our intereſt to reſign it it back into Gods hands again, who, as we muſt needs ac-

acknowledged can carve a thouſand times better for us, than we for our ſelves? why then ſhould we be troubled that our affairs ſometimes run counter to our humours and fancies; did we underſtand the reaſon of Gods dealings, and ſee what he ſeeth, and know what he knoweth, we ſhould praiſe him on our bended knees, for thoſe croſſes which are now the innocent cauſes of our repinings againſt him. This therefore in Reaſon ought to ſatisfie us that we are under the Protection of a moſt wiſe and gracious Providence; and that if afflictions do befal us, they are but Rods in the hands of our Benefactor, and tokens of love from a reconciled Father. For what reaſon can we have either to fear or complain, when we know our ſelves ſheltered within the boſome of that Providence, in which all the Divine Attributes, like ſo many Guardian Angels do pitch their Tents, about us. Within this bleſſed Ark, if we pleaſe, we may live ſecurely, whilſt all the floods of miſery do ſwell, and rove about us; here we may ſing *Requiems* in the loudeſt Thunders, and ſleep ſecurely in the midſt of ſtorms; for what ſhould we be afraid of, when we have Omniſcience for our Pilot, Omnipotence for our Convoy, and All-ſufficient Goodneſs for our Purveyer and Caterer: by the help of this one conſideration a man may bid defiance to miſery, and ſtand impregnable againſt all the Batteries of the world.

Fourthly, and laſtly, Chriſtianity armeth us againſt the evil of miſery, by aſſuring us of a bleſſed Immortality; and verily were it not for the hope of

this, man were of all Creatures the moſt miſerable. For his very Reaſon, by which he is capable of a larger happineſs, doth moſt commonly, in this life, prove an Inſtrument of grief and vexation to him : and as for the Beaſts they are as ſenſible of ſenſual pleaſures as we ; they reliſh their morſels with as great a guſt, and enjoy their delights with as quick a ſenſe, as the greateſt Epicures in the world. Beſides which, their Harmony is not mingled with the ſad diſcords of a wounded Conſcience, which often interrupts our mirth, and puts a ſting to all our pleaſures : And as for troubles the beaſts only feel them whilſt they are preſent, and are not alarmed with fear at the approach of them, nor vexed with deſpair in the preſence of them, nor wracked with fruitleſs cares of removing them ; to all which inconveniencies our Reaſon expoſeth us. So that were it not for the hope of a future happineſs, man, that is the top of this lower Creation, would be the moſt miſerable part of it, and we ſhould have reaſon to envy the happineſs of the pretty Birds, that ſit merrily ſinging on the trees ; and to wiſh that we could change conditions with the Fiſhes, that ſport and play in the ſilver-ſtreams, devoid of all thoſe griefs and ſorrows, cares and anxities with which we are wrackt, and tortured every moment : the only thing therefore that maketh our life deſirable, and giveth it the advantage of Nonentity, is this, that how mean ſoever our condition is here, yet we are born to higher hopes, and are now but Candidates for an Immortal preferment ;

and

and of this the Chriſtian Religion giveth us the moſt certain aſſurance, even by the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead. By this it is that we are begotten into a lively hope of an eternal Inheritance, as the Apoſtle tells us, 1 *Peter* 1. 3. and indeed this is a proof of the Immortal ſtate beyond all other Arguments, whether Moral, or Phyſical; for had not this Doctrine of Immortality been true, it cannot be imagined, that the God of Truth would have ſealed and confirmed it, as he did, by raiſing the Author of it from the dead; ſince in ſo doing he muſt have been guilty of cheating the world, and ſeconding the moſt rank Impoſture, than which we cannot form a conceit more black or incongruous to the nature of God. Wherefore now life and Immortality are as clear and evident as the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, of which we have as full aſſurance as we can poſſibly have of any matter of fact in the world: for the eye-witneſſes of it confirmed their Teſtimony with their blood, which is the higheſt pledge that a man can give of his honeſty, and there is no credit to be given to men, if they may not be believed upon this ſecurity. Thus Chriſtianity, you ſee, hath founded our hopes of Immortal happineſs upon the ſureſt Foundations in the world; which hope is ſufficient to raiſe any conſidering man above the reach of miſery. For would we but keep our thoughts within thoſe higher and untroubled Regions, we ſhould be able to look down upon theſe little affairs, about which poor mortals ſcramble, with as much con-

tempt and ſcorn, as we do upon the toils and labours of a little world of Ants about a Molehil, who are not altogether ſo ridiculous, becauſe they do not divide their molehil into little Empires, nor defraud, and murder, nor be falſe and treacherous to one another for the greater ſhare, nor were they ever ſo extravagant as to march out in Armies to kill their neighbouring Ants, ſo to extend their Dominion over the next handful of a turf: but he whoſe hope hope hath mounted him to Heaven, can from thence look down and ſigh, and ſmile at all theſe fooleries, and ſlight, and undervalue whatſoever ſenſual men, poor ſouls do fear, or hope, or long for, or purſue: for he hath ſuch a glory within the proſpect of his faith and hope, as do at one glimpſe foil all the glory of the world, and unſting all its miſeries. The ſight of that flowery *Canaan* of Reſt and pleaſure that lieth before him, incourageth him to march on with joy and alacrity through this howling deſert of ſorrow and miſery, and make the wilderneſs to ſeem a Paradiſe to him; and at worſt, all the ill uſage that he meets with here, will but make earth more loathſome now, and Heaven more welcome to him hereafter. When therefore he is toſſed in this tempeſtuous Sea, he conſidereth with himſelf, that a few Leagues farther lieth that bleſſed Port where he ſhall be crowned as ſoon as he is landed; and concludes that when he is gotten ſafe on ſhore, he ſhall then look back with pleaſure and delight upon thoſe threatning waves he now encountreth, and for ever bleſs the ſtorms and winds

winds that drave him thither, and ſo reſolveth with St *Paul*, *That the ſufferings of this preſent life are not worthy to be compared with the Joys that ſhall be revealed*, Rom. 8. 18. and thus you ſee what incomparable armour the Chriſtian Religion is, both againſt ſin and miſery. But yet we muſt not think it will defend us, if we only keep it by us to look on; there never was any Souldier ſo fooliſh as to think himſelf ſecure in a Battle becauſe he hath excellent armour at home locked up in his cheſt, or cloſet, and yet ſo beſotted are many men, as to expect defence and ſecurity from their Religion becauſe they are baptized Chriſtians, and have a Scheme of Chriſtianity in their Bibles: as if Religion were nothing but a Charm or Amulet, which being hung about their necks, muſt immediately diſinchant them of all their maladies: but be not miſtaken, if ever you mean this armour of God ſhould do you good, you muſt put it on, you muſt tranſcribe its Doctrines into your belief, and its duties into your practice: which is the ſecond thing I propoſed to diſcourſe of, that if we would have Chriſtianity armour of defence unto us, we muſt put it on, that is, we muſt believe and obey it; for unleſs we believe the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, how can they defend us, either from ſin, or miſery; for our holy Religion doth not work magically upon men, nor make them invulnerable, as the Witch did *Achilles*, meerly by Charms and Inchantments; but it proceeds by rational and accountable Methods and fortifieth our minds by Reaſon and Arguments; but

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no Propoſals of Reaſon can work upon the minds of men that do not believe them ; and though the things propoſed be never ſo true in themſelves, yet unleſs we aſſent to the truth of them, we ſhall be no more concerned in them, than if they were the groſſeſt fictions. For no man will be moved by thoſe things in which he thinketh he hath no intereſt : but in pure falſhoods we can have none, becauſe they are pure Non-entities. To what purpoſe therefore is it that Chriſtianity hath armed us againſt ſin with the ſtrongeſt motives in the world, if we do not believe them, all the Glories it propoſeth will ſignifie no more to us, than the promiſe of a fair Inheritance in *Utopia* ; and we ſhall be no more concerned in all the terrors it denounceth, than if we were only threatned with an invaſion from the world in the Moon ; and what though Chriſtianity fortifies us againſt miſery, with Arguments ſtrong enough to create comfort in hell, yet if we give no credit to them, they will be as far from comforting us, as the feſtival dreams of a ſtarving man, are from ſatisfying his hunger : if therefore we intend that Religion ſhould ſecure us, either from ſin or miſery, we muſt imbrace its propoſals with a hearty and lively faith, and as we muſt believe it, ſo we muſt practice it, elſe it will be as inſignificant to us as the Dreams of the *Alchoran* : for the way of Chriſtian Religion is not to hale and drag men out of the arms of their luſts by force, and irreſiſtable power, but by Arguments to ſollicite them to the practice of thoſe duties it enjoyneth,

joyneth, and by that to wean them from their vicious inclination. For our Religion walks in the Methods of our nature, and carries us on by degrees, from Acts to Habits of Goodneſs: and in this Method it is, that the Divine Grace, which accompanies Chriſtianity doth work its effects upon the ſpirits of men; not by an inſtantaneous infuſion of virtuous Habits into their Wills, but by making effectual addreſſes to their Reaſon, and Conſciences to perſwade them to thwart their vicious inclinations, by practiſing thoſe virtues that are contrary to them: and ſo it goeth on, moving us to a continued repetition of thoſe virtuous acts, until all our evil Habits are gone out, and expired into the contrary Habits of Virtue and Goodneſs. For the Grace of God is like a grafft put into a ſtock of another nature, it makes uſe of the faculties and juyce of the ſtock, but by degrees converts all into its own nature: and therefore we uſually ſee that when a man hath been wicked, the beginnings of his Reformation proceed not from habit and inclination, but from fear and terror; and whilſt he doth obey God, he would rebel if he dared; but perſevering in his obedience, he groweth more habituated to it, and ſo by degrees it becomes his nature. This therefore being the ordinary Method of Chriſtianity to carry us on by repeated acts to permanent habits of virtue, our obedience to its commands is indiſpenſably neceſſary, if we expect it ſhould either reſcue or ſecure us from ſin; for no man is ſecure from ſin, until he is habitually virtuous;

ons; which ſtate without a Miracle no man can arrive to but through intermediate acts of Obedience; and as without the practice of it duties Chriſtianity cannot arm us againſt ſin, ſo neither can it againſt miſery: for all thoſe gracious Promiſes, and comfortable Propoſals by which our Religion arms us againſt the miſerie of this world, are ſuſpended upon the condition of our obedience to its Laws, and whilſt this is wanting, there is not one word of comfort for us in all the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, there is no Promiſe in it will open a door of hope to ſhelter us from the ſtorms of trouble; but all its dreadful threats will be perpetually thundering out their terrors upon us, ſo that if we are reſolved to be wicked, we can never expect comfort from Chriſtianity; for it hath ſet up a flaming Sword to chaſe all wickedneſs out of the Paradice of its joys: ſo that we may as ſoon ſuck Balſom out of a Scorpions ſting, or gather Nectar from a neſt of Waſps, as joy or comfort from the Chriſtian Religion, whilſt we perſevere in our wickedneſs: thus you ſee how neceſſary it is that we ſhould believe the Doctrines and practice the duties of Chriſtianity, if ever we mean that it ſhould arm and defend us. To cloſe up all therefore, as you hope to be the better for your Religion, to be defended by it, either from ſin, or miſery, do not content your ſelves any longer, either with the empty name of Chriſtians, or the formal Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, but endeavour ſeriouſly to work your minds into ſuch an effectual belief of it, as may throughly

throughly mould you into an hearty compliance with its duties; for which end let me perſwade you to ſhake off all that prejudice againſt Religion, which lewd and vicious Principles may have infuſed into your underſtings, and to conſider ſeriouſly with your ſelves, whether it be not a thouſand times more for your intereſt that Religion ſhould be no impoſture, than that you ſhould enjoy your luſts, and whether all thoſe comforts that Religion adminiſters in this life, and all thoſe hopes it giveth of a glorious Immortality in the life to come, be not infinitely more valuable than the ſhort and fulſome pleaſure of a few paltry vices, and ſure if you are wiſe, when you have throughly conſidered this, you will heartily wiſh that Chriſtianity were true, though you ſhould not be able to believe it ſo; but if when you have quitted all your prejudice, you will but impartially ſurvey thoſe many and mighty evidences upon which this excellent Religion is founded, you will ſoon find all that infidelity which now hovers over your underſtandings, vaniſh, and fly away like ſhadows before the Sun; and your minds being once perſwaded into an hearty belief of its Truth and Divinity, you cannot imagine what force you will find in all its motives, and Arguments, then will its promiſes tempt ye a thouſand times more than all the lures, and blandiſhments of vice, and its threats will overpower you with ſuch an awful dread, that nothing in the world will be ſo terrible as ſin; and you will find more life in one word of Religion, than in all the addreſs and Rhetorick of Vice; then you will

no longer complain of the difficulties of Religion, nor be ſtartled at the ſteep aſcents in the way to Heaven; for your faith will every moment ſupply you with new ſtrength and vigour to carry you through all the weary ſtages of your duties; and having thus put on Chriſtianity by faith and obedience, you will find your ſelves inſtantly inſpired by it with ſuch an invincible courage, as will inable you to conquer all the malice, and triumph over all the miſeries of the world. For now we ſhall be Mrs of our own Fortunes, and we need no longer be Tenants at will to the Chances and accidents of the world, but all our happineſs in our own hands, and may chooſe whether we will be miſerable, for whilſt we keep peace with God and our own Conſciences, and do not through our own wilful folly forfeit the bleſſed hope of Immortality; it is not all the power and malice of the world can threaten our ruine, or ſhake the foundation of our happineſs; and therefore as we would be happy both here and hereafter, let us put on the whole Armour of God, and ſincerely ſubmit our faith to the Doctrines, and our practice to the Laws of Chriſtianity; then may we bid defiance to all miſery, and march triumphantly through Heaven to Heaven, and paſs through one Paradice into another: and our Religion having armed us againſt all the troubles of this life, ſhall in the end crown us with the Joys of the life to come.

FINIS.